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what simpler expression, in its fifth. I would point out the fact, however, that all other systems professedly theistic draw their proofs for the being of their God either from naturalistic considerations that must fall short of all attributes properly divine, while they also unavoidably stain the image of the Most High with direct or indirect responsibility for all evil; or they rest their case on that fallacious form of the Ontologic Proof which unavoidably fails to carry us beyond subjective ideality; or else, as in the moral method of Kant, they lose all hold on *known* reality, and leave God's being, for its sole support, to our fealty toward our moral calling.

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THE LIMITATIONS OF ETHICAL INQUIRY.

SUCCESS in any of the sciences is so obviously dependent upon a clear understanding of their special boundaries and method that no apology is necessary for an attempt to define more accurately the logical pre-suppositions of ethical inquiry. No advance is possible without a knowledge of what are, and are not, its legitimate problems and method. More especially the many recent demands for a scientific or, specifically, for a psychological treatment of morality raises these underlying questions of epistemology and make it imperative upon us to understand clearly the purpose of our study.

There are two pre-suppositions which must be made by every special science of a character so simple that it would seem an impertinence to mention them were it not that they have been apparently ignored by many reputable writers on ethics.

1. No science has to prove the existence of its own subject matter, but assumes it as part of the common experience of the race. Zoology is not expected to demonstrate the existence of living creatures, nor do we demand of mineralogy that it prove the reality of minerals. Such sciences take for granted the existence of certain phenomena and set them-

selves the task of discovering their laws. It is of their essence as empirical sciences that they assume a given element independent of the individual investigator, an element not created, but found. These facts once given constitute the materials for analysis and interpretation and all the other activities of knowledge, but the special science is content to explain within its chosen field careless of the reality of its data from any other standpoint than its own. The validity of its conclusions depends upon the fidelity with which it respects these materials of its thought, which are neither proved nor constructed, but found.

In the case of ethics, as the science of moral experience, it is no otherwise. The reality of morality is not a fact which ethics is called upon to prove, but a datum upon which it has to build. The significance of our judgments of a better and worse in conduct is indeed the central problem of the science, but their reality in human experience is beyond the reach of proof. That there is a right and a wrong in every situation of life is not a fact we are at liberty to doubt, however much we may argue in regard to its interpretation. Ethics is not a rational or *a priori* science in the sense that it is independent of experience for it rests upon the actual facts of everyday life as solidly as do any of the biological sciences upon those of physical life. Just as little as the biologist can invent a new life can the moralist invent a new morality. In his own person as actor he may indeed contribute to the morality to be observed but as thinker and critic he must wait upon the results of this creative activity and study them objectively as data. Ethics as a science, then, assumes the existence of its subject matter, the moral experience of men.

2. No special science has to prove the possibility of knowledge about its material, but approaches it directly under the supposition that such knowledge is possible. However various may be the phenomena of life, the biologist pursues his investigations under the tacit assumption that system and unity can be found in them and that a science of them can be constructed. His problem is, not to prove that a system of

them is possible, but to discover what that system actually is. The incompleteness of his knowledge is no ground for scepticism as to its reality, but an incentive to greater labor.

So, too in ethics, it is no part of that science to demonstrate the possibility of a system of our moral experience. The rationality of this it takes for granted and finds its problem only in the concrete determination of what that system is. Conduct may be never so various and apparently inconsistent, yet its variety is no greater than that of the world of physical objects, and the question of knowledge is no more pertinent. It is no greater an assumption and no less necessary that we live in a common world of ends than that we live in a common world of objects. If the judgments we pass upon objects be valid not only for ourselves but for others, it is no less true that the judgments we pass upon ends holds for an experience larger than our own. The moral character of murder is not determined by conditions peculiar to myself alone, it is not a matter of individual caprice, but depends upon conditions valid for all rational beings. So, too, with all other judgments in regard to the values of life, they are capable of reduction to a rational system. This is the assumption of all active life and not a matter for ethical proof. If the possibility of the validity of the judgment that magnets attract iron be not a legitimate problem for physics, neither is wrong a problem for ethics. Whether magnets do attract iron is a physical question, and whether murder is wrong is an ethical one, but the possibility of attaining truth in regard to these matters is a problem with which neither has anything to do. As rational beings we act upon the supposition that there is an ideal order of experience discoverable by thought both in the spheres of fact and of value, a supposition without which there would be neither knowledge nor conduct and which experience is daily proving true.

In respect of both of these pre-suppositions, therefore, ethics is upon the same plane with the natural sciences and is under no necessity for calling its foundations in question. It is free to start with unquestioned data and to investigate

them with uncriticized knowledge. Scepticism in ethics as in the special sciences is out of place.

In the matter of method, again, ethical inquiry must follow the general principles of science. Its aim is theoretical, not practical or hortatory, and as such its conclusions are explanatory of the material of which it treats. Whatever may be the sphere of inquiry, to explain is to exhibit the principle involved in a given instance, thereby relating it to that ordered system of experience we call the real world. The value of the principle consists wholly in its unifying power, its reference to other possible experience with which it relates the instance in question, so that the completed system of the sciences constitutes an exhaustive index to the otherwise baffling complex of reality. To understand is to interpret the meaning of an event, scientific laws and concepts being the symbols through which this meaning is conveyed.

To discover this meaning observation and analysis of experience can be the only method, since it is the meaning of this experience that is sought. The test of truth can be found nowhere save in experience itself which alone can confirm or disallow the judgments made in regard to it. When science has determined the consistency of the individual judgments in regard to reality, when it has reduced them to a coherent system by determining the conditions under which the single judgments are true, its task is accomplished. Its concepts and symbols have value only in reference to this systematic unity of experience.

The method of ethical inquiry must be the same. It, too, seeks to interpret the meaning of a given experience in terms of universal experience through the exhibition of its principle. As the explanation of morality it must look to morality itself for the confirmation of its theories and the meaning of its terms. The significance of Socrates' death can be shown only by reference to the universal principle involved in his voluntary submission to the laws of Athens, and to discover this principle there is no other way than the appeal to the experience itself in which it is contained. His action is explained morally when its place has been found in that system

of judgments which constitutes a rational moral experience, in the same way that the formation of ice is explained when our perceptions of it have been brought into rational unity with the rest of our perceptions of the external world. Analysis and interpretation of actual moral experience is the only sound method of ethical inquiry.

Yet in spite of the fact that ethics uses the same method as that employed in the other natural sciences and that it rests upon the same pre-suppositions, it is important to note an essential difference in the nature of its explanatory concepts. Even among the physical sciences themselves there is this necessary difference in the symbols used, since if they are to have explanatory power they must be adapted to the material to which they refer. Facts are to be explained in terms of other facts like in kind, not in terms of an experience wholly different in its nature. Science does indeed ignore differences in its abstract procedure and treat the most concretely varied objects as if they were alike in kind, as they are from a single point of view, but it does so of purpose and with the recognition that there are other aspects of the same reality whose meanings are not expressed in its single set of concepts. The real purpose of the sciences in their totality is not the ignoring of differences but the complete expression of them in a systematic unity. For each of the many aspects of reality we must have a different set of symbols if the differences of those aspects are to be adequately represented. If life is qualitatively different from the non-living it is idle to expect that its whole significance can be expressed in symbols adapted to the latter. The concepts of biology must differ from those of physics unless the new aspect is to be ignored. Every advance in kind demands the employment of a new and higher system of categories, not to supersede the old, but to supplement them.

If this is true as between the special branches of the physical sciences, much more is it true between the whole body of these sciences and ethics, the difference between which depends not upon a division of territory among the objects of experience, but upon fundamental differences in the aspects

which experience presents. This world of our experience presents itself as a problem both for our intellect and our will. We may, on the one hand, regard it as a series of events to be understood, in which our own actions are to be included as a part, though a very subordinate part, of the whole. We may stand off from our world, subordinate our desires to it, and contemplate it as a spectacle in which our wishes count for nothing, and in which our only interest is to understand the mechanism of the process. To discover the law of this process, the order of this succession, is the goal of our ambition. The concept in which that order is expressed is that of causality—we seek the causes of the events in our experience, the conditions under which they occur. With this term we symbolize the rational order of the world irrespective of its value. The goodness or badness of an action is a characteristic with which natural science has nothing to do, save as it may serve to explain a causal sequence. Its function is completed when it has described the conditions of that which is.

But the world is also a problem for our will, a set of materials for our use, a series of possibilities to be realized. The objects observed so indifferently by science are also objects of our human will, the conditions analysed so coldly and dispassionately are often circumstances unendurable by man. Though regarded by science as only a fact among other facts, man is also a fact and power in the service of an ideal. The world for him is not a fact to be acquiesced in, but a material to be transformed. Life itself is possible only as this active attitude is assumed toward experience, only as a series of choices is made between the better and the worse. There is involved in human experience itself a standard of its worth essential to the existence of that experience. To live is not alone to observe, but to select, to choose, to hold fast to and realize purposes. It is in this selective activity of life that moral experience takes its rise and it is with these choices of a better and a worse that ethics is concerned. Instead of the scientific judgment, *A* is the cause of *B*, the unit of moral experience is, *A* ought to be

done by B. The predicate in the one case is a law of succession, in the other a standard of value. In the one judgment the subject is referred to its place in the order of events, in the other it is estimated with reference to a rational system of life. If then the explanation of any experience consists in exhibiting the principle it involves, or in referring it to its place in a rational and consistent order of experience, and if experience itself presents this twofold aspect, it is evident that explanation must be of two kinds. We may refer our actions to a causal law of occurrence irrespective of their worth, or we may just as legitimately refer them to an ideal system of values irrespective of their occurrence.

This two-fold reference of events means the employment of distinct categories of explanation. The symbols used in determining the objective order of events become inadequate when applied to the value of those events. It is insignificant to reply that B follows A in time when we ask whether B is better than A, in the same way that it would be irrelevant to insist that B is better than A when the problem is as to whether A is the cause of B. Causality has no significance in ethics, nor has obligation in physics. It is no answer to the problem of the value of industry to state the conditions under which men are industrious, or to give the statistics in regard to the prevalence of the habit, or even to show the causes in heredity and environment which lead us to expect industry in our own case, the question of its worth is quite distinct from that of its causal conditions. The ethical problem is concerned with what *now* is worth the doing regardless of the antecedents which have made the conditions actual. The knowledge of these antecedents, the understanding of the history and causal connections of the present bit of experience is indeed valuable, but only as bringing clearly before us its real nature and furnishing us with the materials upon which our judgment of value is passed, not as giving us the standard for that value. The history of a drunkard or of all drunkards does not in itself contain the condemnation of the vice however much it may add to our knowledge of its nature. Our question is not as to our ancestors' habits but as to our

own. On the other hand, this ethical ought has no significance for natural science, whose principle of causality has reference solely to the actual order of experience, but, neither does it contradict it. The ought of morality does not imply a reversal of the natural order, but a judgment upon it from the point of view of its value. Socrates ought not to have been executed however natural may have been the causes which led up to the event. The distinct reality of the real and ideal order of experience makes conflict between the two impossible. To say that an event ought not to have occurred is not to make an assertion in regard to a natural order and hence it is not subject to the conditions of such an order. It is its reference to a place in a consistent system of human values, just as the statement that an event did or did not occur is its reference to a place in a consistent system of human perceptions. The concept of the good expresses this rational system of values and that of obligation the relation of this system to the actual human will.

The modern demand for the application of scientific method to ethics, therefore, is justifiable in so far as it involves the observation and analysis of actual moral experience, but in so far as it demands also the interpretation of that experience in terms of causality it is illegitimate. To base ethics upon psychology or anthropology is to ignore the essential difference in their subject matter and point of view. The moral judgment is indeed a fact in human experience with which psychology is properly concerned, but it is concerned with it wholly as a fact, regardless of its value. The problem for ethics to solve is, not that of the genesis or history of this fact, but that of its place in a rational system of conduct, its goodness or badness with reference to an ideally desirable life. For the solution of this problem the concept of causality is as useless as that of purpose for the explanation of mechanism. The standard by which we value facts is not itself a fact.

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